

PLANNING AND ZONING DEPARTMENT
QUARTERLY REPORT: OCTOBER 1, 2006 – DECEMBER 31, 2006

The Planning and Zoning Commission met seven times this quarter. They met three times in both October and November, and one time in December, on December 5th. Another December meeting was the Parking Workshop sponsored by Darien Revitalization Inc (DRI) which was attended by four Commission members as well as the Planning & Zoning Director.

Permits by type this quarter:

Amendment to Zoning Map: 1 denied
Amendment to the Zoning Regulations: 1 approved
Business Site Plan: 2 approved
Coastal Site Plan Review: 2 granted, 2 amendments granted
Flood Damage Prevention: 3 granted, 1 amendment granted
Land Filling/Excavation: 9 approved
Mandatory Referrals: 1 report issued

Total Number of Projects*: 14. *Total number of projects does not equal number of permits, because some applications include multiple permits.

In October, the Commission approved the extension of the lease to the Darien Boat Club, additions and alterations to the Darien Fire Department building, and the conversion of an existing natural turf baseball field at the high school to artificial turf. On November 14th, the Commission approved an expansion of Ching's Table, which will make it one of the three largest downtown restaurants. The Public Hearing on Whole Foods Market opened on November 7 and was continued to November 28th. That hearing has been further continued to January 16, 2007 in the Auditorium. The Commission will make a decision on this matter within 65 days of the close of the public hearing.

On November 7, the public hearing on the Baywater Post Road Associates II, LLC (Genovese) project at 1014-1020 Boston Post Road was closed, and the Commission approved the project on December 5. This will result in the razing of the existing building and construction of a mixed-use building consisting of 3,700+/- square feet of retail space, 5,500 square feet available for potential restaurants, 9,000 square feet of second floor office space and six apartments on the third floor, with two of those being affordable units. Reconfiguration of the existing Center Street South municipal parking lot will also be a by-product of this project. It has also been specifically designed to account for future re-development of the existing Exxon gas station at the corner of Corbin Drive, and future access into or out of the Center Street municipal lot from Corbin Drive. As one can see, the recent emphasis on Darien Revitalization has resulted in an increased workload for the Planning and Zoning Commission, as new uses are established and expanded in downtown and future planning occurs.

Also this quarter:

- Four Commission members met with Fitzgerald & Halliday Inc. on October 12th to discuss issues related to parking (see more information below).
- A representative of the Department went to West Hartford with DRI and others on November 3 to see first-hand some of the recent work accomplished in downtown West Hartford.
- The Commission had an informal discussion with potential developers of the Procaccini property. A formal application is expected in the first half of 2007.
- The Director and P&Z Chair attended meeting of the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee (AHAC) on November 1st. Some mapping was also done by the Department for the AHAC. Three Commission members attended the AHAC meeting on December 14th.

The Environmental Protection Commission (EPC) met five times this period—twice each in October and November and once in December. A total of 21 applications were granted, one withdrawn, and two application amendments approved. On November 15th the EPC approved a project at 77 Nearwater Lane. That decision has been appealed by the applicant as well as two neighboring property owners. In January and February, the EPC will continue its public hearing on an Inland Wetland and Watercourses Regulation amendment. This proposal modifies the regulated areas around both Tokeneke Brook and Stony Brook.

The Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) met three times this quarter—once each month. In all, they processed seventeen applications: five were granted; one granted in part/denied in part; five denied; and six withdrawn. One application amendment was also granted. Ruth Ann Ramsey was appointed as a ZBA Alternate Member to replace Everett Drugge.

The Architectural Review Board (ARB) also met three times this period. They reviewed and acted upon a variety of requests for signs, awnings and façade changes. This includes approvals for: an addition to the Darien Fire Department; the building elevations of the proposed new Darien Library; and signs for Panera Bread, Towne Ridge Cleaners, and Landmark Financial Group.

This quarter, 138 Zoning Permits were reviewed and acted upon. Of those, sixty-two were acted upon in October; 37 in November; and 39 in December. This is a decrease of four permits over last quarter. These 138 Zoning Permits includes eleven permits for new single-family residences (all were “teardowns” and none were new construction on vacant lots). Six permits were issued for swimming pools this quarter.

Status Update on Parking Regulations Study by Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc. (FHI).

On the morning of the October 12th, Carol Gould and Sam Eisenbeiser of FHI took a field walk to see first-hand the non-residential parking supply in the various non-residential zoning districts. Later that day, they had individual meetings with those involved in managing parking in Darien as well as representatives from DRI, the Chamber of Commerce, and Planning and Zoning Commission members.

The next step for the consultant was data gathering. They took parking occupancy surveys at six specified parking lots within the community on Thursday October 26th. The six lots selected by the consultant were: Goodwives Shopping Center, the Trader Joes parking lot, the Sport Shop/Theater lot, Noroton Heights Shopping Center, Center Street North, and Center Street South. These were selected to get a mix of privately-owned and publicly owned lots, and getting a mix of both downtown lots and lots outside of the downtown area. A Saturday count within those six same lots was done on November 4th. FHI took the peak hour counts over a four hour weekday period and a three hour Saturday midday period, and staff from the Planning and Zoning Department performed counts in both the 8am hour and the 4pm hour in all six lots on October 26th. By not consulting out this work to FHI, and doing it by in-house Department staff, money was saved on this project.

FHI is also in the process of reviewing a number of documents, including the Darien Zoning Regulations, the 2006 Darien Town Plan of Conservation of Development, and the Connecticut Main Street report from May 2006. It is expected that FHI will present a draft technical memorandum to the Planning and Zoning Commission in January or February 2007.

Litigation

Over this quarter, great strides have been made in resolving pending litigation. This includes the official settlement of a number of related cases in the Manelski 11 Pratt Island matter, and the settlement of *Giovanni vs. Darien Zoning Board of Appeals*. The case of *1915 Boston Post Road, LLC vs. Planning and Zoning Commission* has been withdrawn, and is awaiting final court approval of that withdrawal.

GIS Conversion Project

Applied Geographics Inc. (AGI) continues working on this project to convert to ESRI GIS products. Training for employees in many Town Departments is expected next quarter.

CityView Implementation

Representatives from the Town of Greenwich visited Darien on December 6 to see first-hand the implementation of the CityView system. This comes on the heels by the City of Bridgeport a few months ago. Other communities are interested in seeing and understanding the technology implemented in Darien, and how the various Departments are using the new software.